



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 19, 2010

**Contact:** Aurelio Rojas 213-280-6579  
James Bolden 213-200-5314

### **RIDLEY-THOMAS PROMOTES PUBLIC AWARENESS TO REDUCE HEART DISEASE IN THE COUNTY**

**LOS ANGELES** – Acting on a motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Board of Supervisors has proclaimed the week of Feb. 22 “Healthy Heart Awareness Week” in the County to promote the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise.

The Board on Tuesday also approved Supervisor Ridley-Thomas’ request to proclaim Feb. 23 “Heart Disease Awareness Day” and urged County employees to show support for the fight against heart disease by wearing the color red.

“By increasing awareness, speaking up about heart disease, and empowering residents to be informed, thousands of lives can be saved each year,” the Supervisor said.

The County campaign calls for promoting healthy lifestyles to reduce risks, including stress, healthy eating, being active, not smoking, and getting regular check-ups.

Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death in the nation. In Los Angeles County, the prevalence is much higher than the nation as a whole. According to the June 2009 Key Indicators of Success, 7.7 percent of residents were diagnosed with a heart problem.

The rate was 10.1 percent in the Antelope Valley, 9 percent in the South Bay, and 7.6 percent in South Los Angeles. The national average is 4.1 percent.

According to the American Heart Association, women are becoming increasingly susceptible, with heart disease claiming the lives of 460,000 women each year.

“Every minute, one woman dies from heart disease,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

Eric Batch, vice president of advocacy for the American Heart Association, said “too many women die” because they are uninformed about heart disease.

“One in three women suffers in silence, and almost one woman dies every minute of this largely preventable disease,” Batch said. “We can bring a voice to this silent killer to help save lives.”

Doctors have noted a relationship between job stress, emotional strain and social isolation that can contribute to heart disease risk factors such as overeating or smoking.

Through civic engagement, communities can take a proactive approach to help individuals manage stress and reduce heart disease. The Second District’s Empowerment Congress, founded by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, and his Days of Dialogue are examples of forums that empower individuals to engage in community efforts to address such issues.

Several County departments have committed to doing their part in making the community aware of heart disease.

The Los Angeles County Office of Women’s Health is conducting a multi-lingual, multi-cultural *Heart Disease Risk Assessment* to increase awareness of heart disease risk factors among women, encouraging women to adopt healthier lifestyles. Throughout the County, women can call **1-800-793-8090** to participate in the telephone risk assessment and receive educational materials tailored to their risk factors.

The County Department of Public Health has issued recommendations that include the following activities to lower the risk of heart disease:

- **GET ACTIVE.** Exercise everyday for at least 30 minutes; walk, swim, bike, dance, jump, or perform any activity to increase your heart rate for at least 10 minutes at a time, for a total of 30 minutes.
- **EAT MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.** Eat 2 cups of fruits and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables everyday and choose orange and dark green leafy vegetables and legumes two to three times each week.
- **STOP SMOKING.** Seek counseling services and medications from a doctor or health plan to help you stop smoking. Get free help from 1-800-NO-BUTTS.

# # # #